The LAMPLIGHTER
Official Member Newsletter of Washington EMC
February 2025
Serving members in Baldwin, Emanuel, Glascock, Hancock, Jefferson, Johnson, Laurens, Warren, Washington and Wilkinson counties

Understanding factors that impact your energy bills

February brings some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are several key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from Washington EMC, you're provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. You can even see how electricity use may have spiked on days when you used more electricity, such as a particularly chilly day or when relatives were staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

Fuel prices

Washington EMC purchases electricity from our power generation partners, Oglethorpe Power, Green Power EMC and Cooperative Energy Inc., at a wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our local communities. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partners account for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to local homes and businesses—and the cost of fuels that are used to generate that electricity, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuate based on supply and demand. While these fluctuations can impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with these companies to plan ahead and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

Extreme weather

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.

Infrastructure and equipment

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, Washington EMC members pay a monthly base rate charge of $32.50. This flat monthly fee ensures the cost of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered for all members in Washington EMC's service territory. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations and other essential equipment, but also restore that equipment when it is damaged.

Wendy Sellers
President/CEO

Energy policy and regulations

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable

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WashingtonEMC
A Member-owned Electric Cooperative

An electric membership corporation

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Wendy Sellers, President/CEO

OFFICE HOURS
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday through Friday

PHONES
Local (478) 552-2577
Long distance (800) 552-2577

24-HOUR CALL CENTER
To report a power interruption
please call:
Local (478) 552-2577
Long distance (800) 552-2577

BRANCH LOCATIONS

12860 Broad St.
Sparta, GA 31087
Closed on Thursday

100 W. College St.
Wrightsville, GA 31096
Closed on Wednesday

Convenient bill pay options include:
Drive-thru payment window
319 N. Smith St., Sandersville, GA 31082
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
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www.washingtonemc.com
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Look for WEMC in the
App Store or Android Market.
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Community news

Washington EMC loves to give back and participate in our community. This year, we once again supported our local toy drives. We are proud of the communities we serve and proud to assist in these worthwhile programs.

Washington EMC Member Relations and Communications Coordinator Parrish David (left) and Washington County Empty Stocking Fund Representative Renee Jordan.

Georgia Grown Elote (Mexican Street Corn)

Courtesy of Georgia Grown

1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
1/4 teaspoon chili powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
4 whole ears yellow corn, unshucked
5 tablespoons mayonnaise, separated
3 tablespoons sour cream
2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lime juice
Salt and pepper, to taste
4 tablespoons cilantro
1/3 cup crumbled queso fresco
Cilantro leaves, for garnish
1/2 lime, cut into 4 wedges

Combine cayenne pepper, smoked paprika, chili powder and 1/4 teaspoon of salt in a small bowl and set aside.

Prepare a charcoal grill for medium-high heat or preheat a gas grill.

Shuck corn, leaving the tough woody stem to serve as a handle on the end of each ear. Using 2 tablespoons of mayonnaise, brush each ear, including the handle, and season with additional salt.

Grill corn, turning frequently, for about 10 minutes or until fully cooked and charred in some places.

Remove corn from heat and season each ear with chili powder mixture. Transfer corn to a serving dish.

To make the cilantro-lime crema (optional): In a small bowl, stir together sour cream, the remaining 3 tablespoons of mayonnaise and lime juice. Season with salt and pepper. Using a sharp chef's knife, chop cilantro and crush with the flat of the blade to create a paste. Add crushed cilantro to sour cream, mayonnaise and lime juice mixture.

Spoon cilantro-lime crema evenly over the top of each ear of corn. Sprinkle with crumbled queso fresco and chili powder mixture. Garnish with cilantro leaves and serve with lime wedges. *Serves 4.*

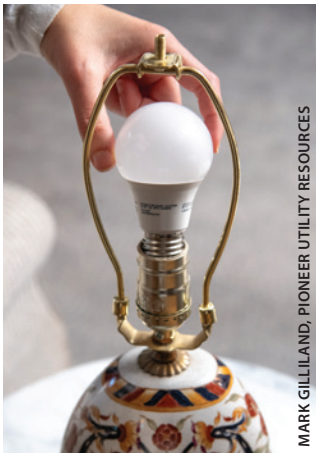
Uncover savings with a DIY energy audit

By Miranda Boutelle

A home-energy audit may sound daunting, but it can be as easy as creating a checklist of improvements based on what you see around your home.

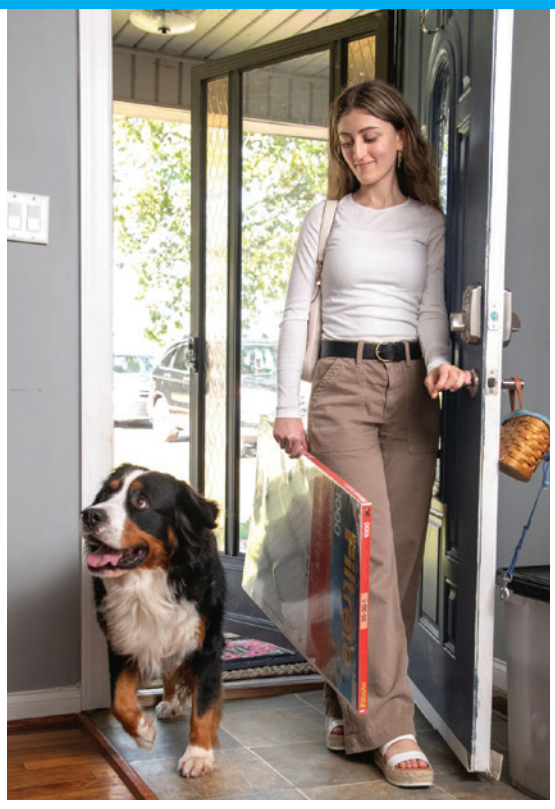
Here's what you'll need to find opportunities to save energy and money: a flashlight, dust mask, tape measure, notepad and cooking thermometer.

1 Check the heating and cooling equipment. Determine the age and efficiency of the equipment by looking up the model number on the nameplate. The average lifespan of HVAC equipment is 10-30 years, depending on the type of equipment and how well it's maintained. If your equipment is older, it may be time to budget for an upgrade. Check the filter and replace it if needed.



MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

LEDs come in a range of color temperatures. For a warm glow similar to incandescent bulbs, buy bulbs with a color temperature around 2700 Kelvin.



MARK GILLILAND, PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

A dirty furnace filter can cause your heating and cooling system to work harder than necessary, decreasing efficiency and shortening the system's life.

2 Check the envelope of your home, which separates the heated or cooled areas from the exterior, for drafts and air leakage. Feel around windows and trim for any drafts. Pay special attention to spots where different building materials come together. Check under sinks for gaps around pipes. Seal with weatherstripping, caulk or expanding foam as needed.

3 Replace incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs with LEDs. They use significantly less energy and last longer than traditional incandescent bulbs.

4 Check for leaking faucets, and make sure aerators and showerheads are high-efficiency models in good condition. The gallons-per-minute (GPM) ratings should be etched onto them. To reduce wasted energy from using more hot water than needed, aerators should be 0.5-1.5 GPM, and showerheads should be no more than 2 GPM.

5 Check the insulation in the attic. Use a tape measure to check the depth of the insulation, which should be a minimum of 12 inches deep. This can vary depending on the type of insulation used and your geography. Insulation can become compacted over time. It should be evenly distributed throughout the attic. Loose fill or blown-in insulation should be fluffy and evenly dispersed. Rolled batt insulation should fit tightly together without gaps.

Also, exterior walls should be insulated. If your home is older than the 1960s, the walls are probably not insulated. Homes from the 1960s or 1970s likely need more insulation. Sometimes, you can see wall insulation by removing an outlet cover or switch plate and using a flashlight to look for insulation inside the wall cavity. Turn off the power at the electrical panel to avoid the risk of electric shock. Wall insulation can be blown in from the inside or the outside of the home. This is a job for a professional.

6 Unfinished basements should have insulation on the rim joists, at minimum. This is the area between the top of the foundation and the underside of the home's first-story floor. Use closed-cell spray foam or a combination of rigid foam and spray foam to insulate rim joists. Crawl spaces should have insulation on the underside of the floor between the floor joists. Insulation should be properly supported in contact with the floor with no air gaps. Water pipes and ductwork should also be insulated.

7 Check the temperature of your water by running it for three minutes at the faucet closest to your water heater. Then, fill a cup and measure it with a cooking thermometer. Hot water should be between 120-140 degrees. You can reduce the temperature on your water heater to reduce energy waste and prevent scalding.

Once your home energy audit is finished, review your findings and start prioritizing home energy-efficiency projects. For step-by-step instructions, visit ***www.energy.gov/save***.

Miranda Boutelle has more than 20 years of experience helping people save energy at home, and she writes on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 electric co-ops.

Factors that impact your energy bills,

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sources and stricter regulations for traditional, always available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities and bolster the long-term reliability of the nation's grid.

You have control

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also reduce energy use by taking advantage of off-peak periods, when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times, such as early in the morning or later in the evening, to save energy. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

Washington EMC is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use Energy Star-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

Source: *energy.gov*